



European Federation of Nurses  
Associations

# EFN UPDATE

October-November-December 2020

## President's Message



Dear EFN Members and Colleagues,

I sincerely hope you all are safe and well and had the opportunity to take a break over the summer. It is now evident that COVID-19 is going to remain with us for quite a while, with a resurgence of numbers in many countries. Therefore, we must in solidarity redouble our efforts to combat the virus while supporting our nurses at the frontline, our most valuable and

precious resource.

For the EFN Office, COVID-19 has been the overriding priority in the last number of months, and it will continue to be so in the months to come. Our General Secretary, Paul de Raeve and our EFN team have been in permanent contact with the EU Institutions since the commencement of the global pandemic. EFN will continue to advocate for our members and represent nurses' perspectives and expertise to inform concrete actions in order to support and protect nurses on the frontline. COVID-19 has had a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of nurses and healthcare professionals. It has reinforced the importance of appropriately protecting all healthcare staff with adequate measures, resources, and protective equipment.

With the ongoing pandemic the EFN Autumn General Assembly, due to take place in Estonia, will now be held virtually, on 15 October 2020. This will enable us to exchange views and discuss the EFN strategic and lobby plan 2021-2027. In addition, it will provide the opportunity to approve key documents that will allow the EFN to progress its EU political agenda.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your hard work in these very difficult and challenging times and for liaising closely with the EFN Office to ensure a strong and united voice for nurses and nursing in the EU.

Take good care and stay safe.

Elizabeth Adams  
EFN President

*"The ongoing COVID-19 outbreak has greatly impacted the EU political debate as the virus heavily impacted EU citizens' life. All politicians and policymakers, together with key health stakeholders, now need to learn together from this crisis and reflect on how we can be better prepared for the next pandemic."*

EFN article on "[How can EU health policy better address COVID-19?](#)", Health Europa, Issue 14, August 2020.

## News from EFN

### EFN meetings with the European Commission to discuss its Report on Lessons Learned from Ebola & COVID-19

Over the last weeks, the EFN Office has held several meetings with high-level European Commission officers, namely DG Sante, DG Connect, DG Echo, and Commissioner Margaritis Schinas Cabinet, to discuss the outcomes of its [Report on Lessons Learned from Ebola & COVID-19](#). This report, which compiles lessons learned by the nursing frontline after both health crisis, has raised the interest of officials who are willing to co-create new policies and measures that support the nursing frontline and that take into account the EFN's expertise.

## EFN Actively participating in EU consultations

As the thick of the EFN's lobby work as moved online, the EFN has been very actively participating in EU consultations. The European Commission has been promoting consultations with stakeholders as a mean to foster the co-design of policies and actions – particularly in the realm of healthcare. All the EFN's input to the EU institutions is available [here](#).

## EFN Articles published on the Health Europa Quarterly

In this period of COVID-19, the EFN has also been quite active in writing articles for publication. As such, after publishing several articles in the [Health Europa Quarterly, to celebrate International Nurses Day \(May 2020\)](#), the EFN published three new articles on the Health Europa Quarterly Special COVID-19 edition, August 2020. These articles are titled "How can EU health policy better address COVID-19?", "COVID-19 and the protection of frontline nurses" (on what the 2010 EU Directive on Sharp Injuries teach us about preventing COVID-19 infection in clinical settings), and "Blockchain to boost continuity of care". All three articles are accessible [here](#).

## EFN compiling and distributing policy reports

During the hardest months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU institutions closed its doors both to most of their staff as well as to external stakeholders. The EFN took this as an opportunity to continue lobbying virtually and compile several reports on key policy topics that are part of the EFN's political agenda. These have been distributed among EU officials and other stakeholders. These reports are: on [digitalisation](#), the [EFN's social media work](#), the [European Semester](#), and the previously mentioned [Report on Lessons Learned from Ebola & COVID-19](#)

## European Commission eHealth Stakeholder Group

On 13 July the European Commission held the first meeting of the recently relaunched eHealth Stakeholder Group, as an online event. The group will support the European Commission in the development of actions for the digital transformation of health and care in the EU. The meeting introduced the new member organisations of the group and discussed topics for a work programme during the course of its three-year mandate. In addition, the European Commission presented the EU digital health response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the current situation with regard to the development of a European Health Data Space and the Digital Transformation of Health and Care. The EFN is a member of this Group. More information is available [here](#).

## News from the EU

### New EU Trio Presidency (Germany, Portugal and Slovenia)

Germany, Portugal and Slovenia have presented their joint EU presidency programme for the next 18 months, starting on 1 July 2020. The focus of the new programme will be on social recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic effects. The first mission of the trio Presidency, which started with Germany, is to make sure that all the EU Member States agree on the COVID-19 recovery fund for Europe. The EFN Office will closely monitor the development of this new EU Presidency to make sure that nurses' voice is heard. The programme of the Presidency Trio is available [here](#).

### State of the Union 2020

On 16 September, European Commission President von der Leyen addressed Europeans in her first State of the Union speech. She started her speech by thanking the nurses and other healthcare professionals for their very valuable work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, she argues that it is about time that we push for a stronger "EU of Health", with more competencies in the realm of healthcare.



### **European Commission completes vaccines portfolio following talks with a sixth manufacturer**

The European Commission has concluded exploratory talks with BioNTech-Pfizer to purchase a potential vaccine against COVID-19. BioNTech-Pfizer is the sixth company with which the Commission has concluded talks, following Sanofi-GSK on 31 July, Johnson & Johnson on 13 August, CureVac on 18 August and Moderna on 24 August. The first contract, signed with AstraZeneca, entered into force on 27 August. More information is available [here](#).

### **Two years since the GDPR Implementation**

2020 marks the two-years anniversary of the adoption and implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation in the EU. The EFN has been working hard making sure that data protection and private are enshrined by default and by design in the EU projects it is part on, as well as on all aspects of it that could affect the nursing profession.

### **EU countries make good use of the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative**

The European Commission has published a first, provisional evaluation of how the EU Member States have been making use of the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII) packages. Since its adoption, Member States have mobilised with unprecedented speed vast amounts of cohesion policy resources to fight the coronavirus crisis. So far, 26 EU countries and the UK have made use of the flexibilities provided for under the CRII, and 18 countries have adjusted their cohesion policy programmes accordingly. There are 88 confirmed coronavirus relevant programme amendments from 18 countries. More information is available [here](#).

### **Preparing the EU for future COVID-19 outbreaks**

The EU must ensure it is ready for possible resurgences of COVID-19 cases. Tackling new outbreaks efficiently will require closely coordinated, short and long-term actions to strengthen preparedness and response across all Member States. For that, the European Commission, in cooperation with other EU institutions, have prepared a communication aiming at ensuring the EU's short-term health preparedness in case of further COVID-19 outbreaks in Europe. This Communication draws on the main lessons learned, positive and negative, and outlines key measures to be taken in the coming months. The full communication is accessible [here](#). The EFN Office met with the Cabinets of Commissioner Vestager, Lenarcic and Kyriakides to come up with proposals on how to tackle future outbreaks while protecting the nursing workforce while they do their jobs. The frontline nurse profession should be a top priority in all future actions.

### **Majority of health jobs held by women**

The European Commission's Eurostats (the office in charge of the official EU-produced statistics) informs that in the last quarter of 2019, 14.7 million people aged over 15 were employed in health occupations in the European Union (EU), representing over 7% of all persons employed and almost 4% of the total population. These health jobs include nurses and midwives as well as their assistants (4.5 million), medical doctors (1.9 million), personal care workers (4.1 million), other health professionals and their associates (4.1 million). More information is available [here](#).

### **Corona nursing informatics help line for nurses**

The nursing informatics community from the International Medical Informatics Association's Nursing Informatics Special Interest Group (IMIA NI SIG) and the European Federation of Medical Informatics Nursing Informatics (EFMI NI) have collaborated to offer resources to support nurses. Their goal is to provide different kinds of material such as videos, article, PowerPoint presentations, tip sheets etc. about how to use digital tools in clinical practice and education. Their resources may help frontline nurses to better understand how nursing informatics will facilitate clinical practice, nursing education and research. These materials are open access and available to use and share. The current materials cover three areas: [daily practice](#), [education](#), and [research & development](#).

### **The new Pharmaceutical strategy for Europe progresses**

The new strategy aims at creating a new regulatory framework that supports the industry in promoting research and new technologies

while putting patients at the centre of it. It also considers all the weaknesses exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and fosters actions to strengthen the resilience of our healthcare systems. More information is available [here](#). The EFN has been very active in the drafting of the new pharmaceutical strategy, proving input through public consultations, to ensure that the results meet the needs of the frontline nurse profession. Moreover, the EFN Office will meet with Health Commissioner Kyriakides to discuss this and other topics.

### **Event Report from the European Commission on Blockchain Standardization**

The European Commission organised a webinar titled "*Joining Forces for Blockchain standardisation*" focused on the following topics: 1) Identity, 2) Interoperability, 3) Governance, and 4) Smart Contracts. The webinar brought together more than 400 experts working with blockchain standardisation from all over the world. Regions actively participating were Europe, North America, South America, and Asia. This webinar gave an overview of standardisation activities related to blockchain and distributed ledger technologies worldwide. High-level standardisation experts discussed cohesion possibilities and liaison opportunities. The full event report is available [here](#).

### **First Strategic Foresight Report**

The European Commission adopted its first-ever Strategic Foresight Report, aiming to identify emerging challenges and opportunities to better steer the European Union's strategic choices. Strategic foresight will inform major policy initiatives. It will support the Commission in designing future-proof policies and legislation that serves both the current needs and longer-term aspirations of European citizens. The 2020 Report presents the rationale for using foresight in EU policy-making, and introduces a comprehensive concept of EU resilience. The 2020 Strategic Foresight Report proposes prototype resilience dashboards to kick-start discussions among Member States and other key stakeholders on how best to monitor resilience. The full report is available [here](#).

### **European Parliament argues that EU countries should harmonise testing procedures and frequency**

The European Parliament Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) argues that the EU needs a common approach to limit COVID-19 and avoid member states designating other EU countries as red zones. Many MEPs highlighted the need to achieve a common approach in limiting the spread of COVID-19 and replace the current tendency for many member states to designate other EU countries as red zones and close borders. More background information is available [here](#).

### **European Parliament want safe vaccines, full transparency and liability for pharmaceutical companies**

The European Parliament Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) underlined the need for transparency to achieve trust in future COVID-19 vaccines and regretted that more information on the Commission's work related to the purchase agreements for COVID-19 vaccines had not been shared proactively by the European Commission. Many MEPs raised the issue of liability for medical companies producing vaccines and underlined that there should be no exceptions from current rules. Some MEPs would like to get the confirmation that results of clinical trials would be made public. More background information is available [here](#). In line with this, the EFN is one of the three co-chairs of the Coalition for Vaccination, a initiative set by the European Commission in cooperation with the three major healthcare profession (nurses, doctors and pharmacists) to foster vaccination among their respective workforces in the EU.

### **EU must step up efforts to tackle medicine shortages**

The European Parliament Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) calls for more EU self-sufficiency and better-coordinated strategies to tackle medicine shortages. In a report on the shortage of medicines, adopted by 79 votes to 1 and 0 abstentions, the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee addresses the root causes of medicines shortages. It stresses the need for an increased EU response, as the problem has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 health crisis across Europe with a direct negative impact on patients' health, safety and the continuation of their treatment. More information is available [here](#). The European

Commission's Guidelines on the optimal and rational supply of medicines to avoid shortages during the COVID-19 outbreak are available [here](#).

**Citizens call for a bigger EU budget to tackle crisis, new survey shows**

In a new survey commissioned by the European Parliament and conducted in the second half of June 2020, nearly seven out of ten respondents (68%) want a stronger role for the EU in fighting this crisis. More than half (56%) believe this requires greater financial means for the EU, which should be directed primarily at tackling the impact of the pandemic on the health sector and the economy. More than half of respondents (53%) remain dissatisfied with the solidarity shown between EU Member States during the pandemic. The full results of the survey are available [here](#).

**Publications**

**Artificial Intelligence: first quantitative study of its kind finds uptake by businesses across Europe is on the rise**

The European Commission has published the first quantitative overview on the uptake of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies among European enterprises. This study will help monitor the adoption of AI in Member States and further assess the challenges faced by enterprises, for their internal organisation and externally. The full study is accessible [here](#).

**Coronavirus vaccines strategy**

The European Commission published a new brochure explaining that the development and distribution of an effective and safe vaccine against the coronavirus represents a lasting solution to the pandemic and a cornerstone of the European Commission's coronavirus response. The deployment of a vaccine will protect lives and livelihoods and save billions of euros across Europe and the world. The full publication is accessible [here](#).



**Coronavirus global response - United to make the world a safer place**



President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen rallied the international community around the need to develop a vaccine, produce it, deploy it to every single corner of the Earth and make it available against coronavirus at affordable prices. A vaccine that would be our universal, common good. On 24 April President von der Leyen invited countries and organisations around the world to pledge to help reach the target of €7.5 billion. The full publication is accessible [here](#).

**European Health Parliament 2019-2020 Recommendations Book**

The European Health Parliament is about to publish its new edition of the Recommendations Book, covering the period 2019-2020. It will contain individual policy recommendations on the future of healthcare covering the role of patients, digitalisation, and current global trends. The book will be accessible [here](#).

**Education at a Glance 2020, OECD**

Education at a Glance is the authoritative source for information on the state of education around the world. It provides data on the structure, finances and performance of education systems across OECD countries and a number of partner economies. More than 100 charts and tables in this publication – as well as links to much more available on the educational database – provide key information on the output of educational institutions; the impact of learning across countries; access, participation and progression in education; the financial resources invested in education; and teachers, the learning



environment and the organisation of schools. The full report is available [here](#).

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**Civic space – experiences of organisations in 2019**

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) compiled a paper presenting key findings from FRA's second consultation of its Fundamental Rights Platform, focusing on the experiences of civil society organisations (CSOs) working on human rights. FRA started an annual consultation with organisations participating in its platform in 2018. The full paper is available [here](#).



**Reinforcing EU social funds to help recover from the crisis**



The coronavirus pandemic will have a negative impact on the labour market, in particular regarding youth unemployment. We must repair and prepare for the next generation, building a more sustainable, resilient and fair Europe. The European Commission has put forward changes to the EU's social funding programmes to tackle these challenges, and to ensure that the recovery will be socially fair. EU social funds will also play a major role in the twin green and digital transitions. The European Pillar of Social Rights remains our compass in this

endeavour. The full publication is available [here](#).

**Facing the digital transformation. Are digital skills enough?**

Digitalisation presents great opportunities for economic growth and improvements in working conditions. At the same time, it brings challenges such as new skill requirements – with potentially important distributional implications in the absence of commensurate policy action. To facilitate the digital transition and reap its benefits, people will need a broad set of skills. While education and training policies fall mostly under the responsibility of Member States, the EU can support human capital development by promoting cooperation and the exchange of best practices among Member States, and through targeted financial support.



**CORDIS' Horizon2020 Collaboration Network**

CORDIS (the Community Research and Development Information Service of the European Commission) has published a Collaboration Network interactive map bringing together the results of all the EU's research and innovation framework programmes since 1990 (Horizon 2020, FP7, and earlier). The map is accessible [here](#).

**Agenda**

To view the upcoming meetings' dates, click [here](#).

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